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## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please substitute the following set of claims for all prior versions of claims. The amendments to the claims are indicated below:

1 to 13 (Cancelled).

14. (Currently Amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:

an active element provided on a semiconductor substrate, said active element including at least two diffusion layers and a gate electrode;

a metal wiring layer provided on said active element;

an interlayer insulating film covering said active element;

a pad metal for an electrode pad forming an external electrical terminal for said semiconductor device, said pad metal being provided ~~on~~ over said interlayer insulating film and substantially covering the at least two diffusion layers and ~~a~~ said gate electrode of the active element, wherein said active element is on a side of the interlayer insulating film opposite to the pad metal; and

a barrier metal layer provided ~~on~~ over said active element ~~with~~ and said interlayer insulating film ~~therebetween~~, so that said pad metal is provided on said barrier metal layer and covering said active element, wherein:

said interlayer insulating film has at least a level difference compensating film for compensating for a level difference of the metal wiring layer; and

a portion of said level difference compensating film under said pad metal is removed.

15. (Currently Amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:

an active element provided on a semiconductor substrate, said active element including at least two diffusion layers and a gate electrode;

a metal wiring layer provided on said active element;

an interlayer insulating film covering said active element;

a pad metal for an electrode pad forming an external electrical terminal for said semiconductor device, said pad metal being provided ~~on~~over said interlayer insulating film and substantially covering the at least two diffusion layers and ~~a~~said gate electrode of the active element, wherein said active element is on a side of the interlayer insulating film opposite to the pad metal; and

a barrier metal layer provided ~~on~~over said active element ~~with~~and said interlayer insulating film ~~therebetween~~, so that said pad metal is provided on said barrier metal layer and covering said active element,

wherein:

said interlayer insulating film has at least a level difference compensating film for compensating for a level difference of the metal wiring layer; and

said level difference compensating film is formed to a minimum thickness necessary for compensating for the level difference of the metal wiring layer.

16. (Currently Amended) The semiconductor device as set forth in claim 14, further comprising a passivation film, said passivation film being formed ~~so~~as to cover a large part of said pad metal, and an aperture in said passivation film having an edge adjacent an inside edge of said pad metal.

17 to 21 (Cancelled).

22. (Currently Amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:  
an active element provided on a semiconductor substrate, said active element including at least two diffusion layers and a gate electrode;

a lower interlayer insulating film formed ~~so~~as to cover said active element;  
a metal wiring layer provided on said lower interlayer insulating film;  
an upper interlayer insulating film formed ~~so~~as to cover said metal wiring layer;  
and

a pad metal for an electrode pad forming an external electrical terminal for said semiconductor device, said pad metal being provided ~~on~~over said upper interlayer insulating film and substantially covering the at least two diffusion layers and a gate electrode of the active element, wherein said active element is on a side of the upper and lower interlayer insulating films opposite to the pad metal,

another metal wiring layer formed ~~on~~over the active element;  
wherein each of said lower and upper interlayer insulating films have a trilaminar structure, each of a first layer and a third layer of the trilaminar film being a silicon

nitride film or a silicon oxide film, while a second layer of the trilaminar film being formed of spin-on-glass;

and the second layer of the upper interlayer insulating film formed to a minimum thickness necessary for compensating the level difference of the metal wiring layer.

23 to 24 (Cancelled).

25. (Currently Amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:

an active element provided on a semiconductor substrate, said active element including at least two diffusion layers and a gate electrode;

a first metal wiring layer formed ~~on~~over the active element;

a plurality of other metal wiring layers above said active element; and

a plurality of interlayer insulating films each being provided between a pair of said metal wiring layers, wherein said plurality of interlayer insulating films and plurality of ~~other~~ metal wiring layers are vertically aligned above the active element;

wherein each interlayer insulating film has a multilayer structure including at least a spin-on-glass film sandwiched between insulating films formed of a silicon nitride film or a silicon oxide film;

further wherein the film formed of spin-on-glass in the interlayer insulating film ~~being~~is formed to a minimum thickness necessary for compensating for a level difference of one of said metal wiring layers;

a pad metal for an electrode pad forming an external electrical terminal for said semiconductor device, said pad metal being provided ~~on~~ over said interlayer insulating films.

26. (Currently Amended) The semiconductor device as in claim 25 wherein the pad metal substantially covers at least two diffusion layers and ~~a~~said gate electrode of the active element, wherein said active element is on a side of the interlayer insulating film opposite to the pad metal.

27. (Previously Presented) The semiconductor device as in claim 16, further comprising another barrier metal layer, said another barrier metal layer is provided on the passivation film and the pad metal which is exposed by a window in the passivation film.

28. (New) A semiconductor device as set forth in claim 14, wherein said pad metal is connected to said metal wiring layer via a through-hole in said interlayer insulating film, wherein the through-hole does not penetrate the level difference compensating film.

29. (New) A semiconductor device as set forth in claim 15, wherein said pad metal is connected to said metal wiring layer via a through-hole in said interlayer insulating film, wherein the through-hole does not penetrate the level difference compensating film.

30. (New) A semiconductor device as set forth in claim 22, wherein

said another metal wiring layer is connected to the at least two diffusion layers,  
and also connected, via a through-hole, to said metal wiring layer provided on said lower  
interlayer insulating film

said pad metal is connected to said metal wiring layer via a through-hole made at  
sad upper interlayer insulating film, and

the respective through-holes in said upper and lower interlayer insulating films do  
not penetrate respective second films of said upper and lower interlayer insulating films.

31. (New) A semiconductor device as set forth in claim 25 wherein

said first metal wiring layer is connected to the at least two diffusion layers,

a pair of upper and lower metal wiring layers of said metal wiring layers are  
connected to each other via a through-hole, each interlayer insulating film having the  
through-hole, and

the through-hole is formed so as not to penetrate a spin-on-glass of each interlayer  
insulating film